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DE RUEHBUL #1448/01 1641227
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4351
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001448

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: PRT TARIN KOWT - CHORA RESIDENTS TURN OUT TO ELECT
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

1. (SBU) Summary: Rozi Khan won an election for Chora's district administrator with 30 percent of the total 2600 ballots cast. Six candidates, representing four of the tribes in the district, vied to replace the interim district administrator, an Afghan Army officer. Normally, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) appoints district administrators, but Governor Hamdam organized the elections in an effort to select a district administrator whom the differing factions would support. Hamdam also wanted to remove local power broker Jan Mohamed Khan from the selection process. Hamdam had secured the support of the IDLG in advance to allow the winner to become the official district administrator. Tribal leaders, elders and local mullahs agreed to support the results of the election, but Jan Mohamed Khan, who has long enjoyed President Karzai's patronage, has already stated that he does not accept Rozi Khan's election.

Elections) Initiated by the Governor and Supported by Elders

2. (SBU) Governor Hamdam announced in late May that he planned to hold elections for district administrators in Chora, Khas Uruzgan, and Shahid Hassas. Hamdam had just returned from meetings in Kabul where he complained to President Karzai about Jan Mohamed Khan's influence on Uruzgan local politics. (President Karzai has long been Khan's patron. The President's favoritism towards Khan has exacerbated Uruzgan's tribal rivalries, which the Taliban have exploited.) Khan is a former Uruzgan governor who continues to dominate local politics, including exerting pressure on the current governor to select his supporters for government posts.

3. (SBU) The election was not sanctioned by the Independent Election Commission and does not have legal standing. However, Hamdam told PRTOff that during meetings in Kabul with IDLG Director Popal and Jan Mohamed Khan, they agreed that the winners of the elections would become the official IDLG-appointed district administrators. Hamdam believed that by holding elections, he would remove Jan Mohamed Khan from the selection process and ensure that the district administrators had the support of a majority of Chora's residents.

4. (U) The nomination for the position was open to anyone who applied. The Dutch-led PRT facilitated a district shura a few days prior to the election to determine the mechanics and to gain commitments that all parties would accept the results

of the election. The shura agreed on the minimum voting age (18), methods to determine eligibility in the absence of voter registration cards and national identification cards (village elders would vouch for voters), privacy in the ballot room, polling hours and monitoring procedures. The elders decided that the election would mimic Afghan election law as nearly as possible, but that Coalition military and civilian representatives would act as monitors instead of the Independent Election Commission.

The Candidates

15. (U) The initial seven candidates represented five of the dominant tribes in Chora. Rozi Khan (Barakzai) recently served as an unpaid caretaker district administrator in Chora and is popular with most tribal leaders and Chora residents. Ghulam Farooq (Popalzai) was formerly a district administrator in Chora and in Khas Uruzgan. He is viewed as neutral to Jan Mohamed Khan. Yar Mohammed (Achakzai) was a former district administrator in Chora and in Deh Rawod and a personal friend of Jan Mohamed Khan. Daru Khaksar lacked any power base or tribal affiliations. He was the most educated candidate, having trained as a pharmacist and having had other higher education. Abdul Sadiq (Achakzai) is related to Member of Parliament (MP) Abdel Khaliq Khan and to Chora leader Malem Sadiq. Gar Mohammed (Alikozai) is a teacher with no tribal affiliations. Mohammed Naim, who withdrew prior to the election, had served as a police administrator in Shahid Hassas and is viewed as an outsider in Chora.

Large Turnout of Patient and Orderly Voters

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16. (U) The polls opened at the Chora District Center at 7 a.m., and more than 2000 locals had gathered outside the center by 8 a.m. The crowd was calm and orderly during the long wait; some waited more than six hours to vote as candidates offered them water and candy and solicited their votes. Throughout the day, Governor Hamdam distributed water to the voters and thanked them for coming. He spoke of the importance of picking the best leaders and reminded them that they could make their own choices without accepting their mullahs or leaders' choices. Some of the candidates rented vehicles to bring voters from the more remote areas. The mood was generally upbeat; several voters stated that they were tired of current leaders who "stole from them" and wanted to pick someone better.

17. (U) Most of the voters did not have voter registration cards or national identification cards. Few had ever voted, and monitors explained the voting process to each of the voters in the ballot room. Monitors inked voters' thumbs and took their pictures to discourage fraud. Two younger voters attempted to wash off the ink and vote again but were caught and detained until after the polls closed at 4 p.m.

18. (U) The six candidates, Governor Hamdam, the police administrator, Afghan National Army Brigade Commander, Dutch Polad and U.S. PRTOff observed as two Tarin Kowt-based judges counted the ballots. Rozi Khan received 851 (30 percent) of the 2600 votes counted. Next was Gar Mohammed with 669 votes. Some voters expressed their disappointment with the outcome, but there were no demonstrations and the crowd dispersed in an orderly fashion.

Jan Mohamed Khan Reacts Negatively

19. (U) Jan Mohamed Khan has protested to the Dutch-led PRT that he would not accept Rozi Khan as district administrator. He is reportedly in Chora telling elders that the election was rigged and that ballots were destroyed. The Governor has asked the PRT to meet with Jan Mohamed Khan to remind him that he agreed in advance to accept the results.

Outstanding ANSF Coordination

¶10. (U) Cooperation among all Afghan National Security Forces was excellent. Insurgents had threatened to disrupt the election by attacking the District Center. The Afghan police, army and National Directorate for Security jointly planned and executed a layered defense around the city, searching all vehicles that entered the town and all individuals who entered the center. Despite the fact that the election took place on the one-year anniversary of heavy fighting in Chora between Coalition and insurgent forces, which resulted in civilian deaths, there were no security incidents or violence.

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